

Rethinking Joint Training



UH-60As landing on
USS Essex.

U.S. Navy (Ty Swartz)

By ANTHONY HAUGRUD, GARY C. LEHMANN, and CURTIS PHILLIPS

The Chairman initiated the joint training system (JTS) in 1994 to prepare the Armed Forces to fight together and win in a joint environment. Its concepts are sound. The system will ensure that the military is ready to meet joint warfighting requirements. Unfortunately, the system has not been following the established concepts. It is undisciplined and executed haphazardly. This must change in order to live up to the promise of *Joint Vision 2020*.

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Guidance and Guidelines

Under current joint doctrine, the framework in the joint training system is used by the joint community to identify requirements, develop plans, and execute, evaluate, and assess joint training events. It is designed to ensure that forces are prepared to promote peace and stability and to defeat enemies. It offers an integrated requirements-based way to align training programs with assigned missions consistent with command priorities and resources. The system is guided by five principles: focusing on the warfighting mission, training as you will fight, using commanders as primary trainers, applying joint doctrine, and centralizing planning while decentralizing execution.

The joint training system consists of four phases: identifying requisite capabilities based on

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assigned missions, proceeding through event planning, executing training, and assessing how well training is accomplished.

The requirements phase describes what a command must be capable of doing. Combatant commands both conduct mission analysis and publish a joint mission essential task list (JMETL) for subordinate commanders. The list defines mission requirements in terms of tasks that must be performed to certain standards and the responsible organizations on all levels throughout the force that must be trained to a prescribed frequency to meet those tasks and standards. In theory, these requirements are driving factors behind all requirements-based JTS events. Joint exercises provide a medium for joint training and should be scheduled and conducted to train existing requirements.

The planning phase begins once the command JMETL is approved. Commanders consider what training is required and who must be trained, as well as command priorities. CINCs

provide guidance to staffs to initiate planning and issue objectives on performance and training conditions. The objectives form the basis for building joint training plans, which lead to

exercise and training schedules and the CJCS joint training master schedule. CINCs also begin to analyze the balance between the resources required (time, funds, personnel, organizations) and those available.

The execution phase is focused on conducting training events, which may take the form of seminars and workshops or field training and command post exercises. All events include planning, preparation, execution, and post-exercise evaluation. Taken together they frame exercises and guide them to completion. The post-exercise evaluation is particularly key because it provides input to guide future training.

In the assessments phase, commanders seek to determine mission capability from a training perspective. Products from the execution phase become inputs. The actual assessment is done by commanders using results from assessment plans outlined in joint training plans. This phase has three purposes: to provide a structure for commanders to make judgments on command ability and confidence to accomplish assigned missions, to provide feedback to adjust training shortfalls, and to support external processes related to readiness. Though assessments complete the joint training cycle, they also begin the next cycle because they drive future training plans.

Reality Check

The CJCS exercise program is designed to provide a way to execute the joint requirements-based training cycle. According to a study by the General Accounting Office (GAO) completed in 1998 on joint training, the program is not effectively scheduled under its priorities and objectives. The highest training priority, supporting warfighting/contingency plans, had the least percentage of exercises scheduled to support it, while the majority supported the second priority, engagement. One can argue that engagement requirements are paramount and that if done properly they prevent the need to employ trained and ready forces for joint combat operations. Yet contrasting demands of warfighting readiness and the imperatives of engagement have put great stress on the system.

There is real friction in that combatant commanders are responsible for scheduling joint and combined exercises while services and functional components are tasked with funding, manning, and executing training. Commanders cannot ignore engagement requirements but rather must use a system not designed for them. Service and component frustration stems from a lack of definitive planning priorities with which to allocate resources to meet warfighting and engagement missions. The services have no consistent authoritative guidance on planning. This results in two necessary but competing programs—training and engagement—grouped under one system designed for only one purpose. A requirements-based process that provides no realistic consensus on what makes a requirement serves neither goal well.

The joint training system is quickly losing its focus. The integrity of the system diminishes as commands move from one phase to the next. The challenge is conducting effective joint training for forces who also must participate in engagement activities which have little to do with training joint warfighting requirements.

A joint training study by GAO in 1995 offered evidence of shortcomings in this phase:

CINC officials said that they seldom test whether prior problems have been corrected in their exercises because (1) the Joint Staff has not required them to do so and (2) they had insufficient time to analyze past problems before planning future exercises. One CINC training official stated that joint exercises consist merely of accomplishing events rather than training and that problems identified during prior exercises may be "lessons recorded" but not necessarily "lessons learned." The views of this official reflect a systemic problem in planning joint exercises that surfaced in a 1990 joint exercise.

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AV-8Bs at Joint
Readiness Training
Center.



USS Tortuga off
Curaçao during
exercise.



U.S. Navy (Martin Maddock)

The lessons learned report noted that players generally had no awareness of joint universal lessons learned or remedial action projects from previous exercises. The apparent absence of continuity or long-term perspective on the part of exercise planners and players tends to cause needless repetition and a lack of focus.

Evaluation of the execution phase, which includes training proficiency evaluations and joint after action reviews, is suspect since training audiences are often based on the forces most available to take part rather than those most in need of the training. These complications impact on the final phase of the joint training system. If finished products from the execution phase are inputs for the assessment, and finished

products from the execution phase are basically flawed, the assessments phase is doomed to failure. CINC evaluations of joint training and exercise events tend to be both subjective and do not critically assess force readiness for joint operations. Thus the joint training system has become a self-sustaining and ineffective process that does not resemble its conceptual origins. And it does not adequately address joint experiments and other joint activities such as the all-service combat identification evaluation team, joint warrior interoperability demonstration, and advanced concept technology demonstration.

Doomed to Failure

Most joint and combined exercises and engagement activities are locked into schedules

55th Signal Company (Aron Robert Kughen)

with foreign nations through government-to-government agreements concluded years in advance. Like multinational operations, these activities require exhaustive coordination with all participants, often resulting in training objectives being diluted in order to reach consensus or host-nation agreement. The joint training study conducted by GAO suggests the problem is pervasive. In that report, the Directorate for Operational Plans and Interoperability (J-7), Joint Staff, and CINC representatives offered two reasons for conducting so little joint training. First, the objectives of gaining access to seaports and airstrips, maintaining regional presence, and fostering rela-

organized around a pre-designated theater staff and that implications for the future include training, manning, infrastructure, investment requirements, and exercise regimes.

To meet all competing manpower requirements, Reservists often augment exercise staffs. The point of staff training should be to train those who will be on the JTF staffs in real-world contingencies.

Fixing the System

With the joint training information management system (JTIMS), the electronic and on-line version of the joint training system, it is expected to provide one-stop-shopping for scheduling and deconflicting resources for joint training events. JTIMS will help alleviate some deficiencies, but it will fail to cure the fundamental training versus engagement priority issue.

The first issue that should be resolved is eliminating unnecessary exercises that drive up the operating tempo. The joint training system should provide a tool for tracking accomplished tasks regardless of where they are conducted. It should also be flexible enough to allow forces not to participate in scheduled joint training events based on their proficiency. Training a force to accomplish tasks already demonstrated wastes resources.

Proactive leadership is also needed. The problems hindering past joint training are likely to recur without greater Joint Staff program oversight. Fortunately there are hopeful signs. Efforts by many organizations since 1994 have improved both thinking and writing on joint training. Joint training publications are constantly being revised to capture the latest conceptual and technological advances. The Joint Staff issued a revised comprehensive glossary in 1999 to standardize joint training terms and definitions in joint training publications. Recently, the Joint Staff approved funds for a JTS specialist at each combatant command to ease the burden of administrative training responsibilities and provide continuity in long-term JTS expertise. Lastly, the system is becoming more user-friendly through ongoing development, testing, distribution, and implementation of the joint training information management system.

Consideration must also be given to relations among joint training events, experiments, engagement activities, and other requirements that do not fall in a previous category. There needs to reach a consensus on dealing with diverse requirements before the joint training system can be made flexible enough to include these related yet different entities. To help bring joint training and engagement into a common system, the next step is including engagement

training becomes more a demonstration of goodwill than a useful test of joint and coalition forces

tions with foreign militaries have taken precedence over training forces for joint operations. Second, since allied and friendly forces have varying levels of operational ability, the complexity of tasks included in exercises with them must frequently be matched to the limited capabilities of the foreign forces. In some regions, foreign militaries are simply not prepared to participate in larger joint exercises. Training becomes more a demonstration of goodwill than a useful test of joint and coalition forces.

Another issue is that many JTF staff training exercises are more single service than joint. The initial joint manning document for a staff training exercise in fiscal year 2000, for example, featured the following participant percentages: Army, 52; Navy, 5; Marine Corps, 3; Air Force, 27; and special operations forces, 13. This imbalance violates the principles of joint doctrine.

Another JTS issue is manning exercise staffs. Far too many participants are not actual JTF battlestaff personnel. As the GAO joint training study concluded

The lack of adequately trained joint task force staffs has hindered the effectiveness of exercises and operations since 1987. For example, joint universal lessons learned reports from Reforger exercises in 1987, 1988, and 1992, Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm in 1990–91, and Restore Hope in Somalia in 1992–93 noted that joint task force staffs were not adequately trained prior to deployment to the theaters of operation, thereby hindering operational effectiveness.

The CJTF–Noble Anvil command brief (“A View from the Top”) in 1999 following operations in Kosovo noted that the joint task force was not

F-16s on flightline at Aviano air base.



U.S. Air Force (Dave Ahlswede)

activities in the universal joint task list. The Joint Staff should analyze CINC engagement strategies and plans and develop universal engagement tasks. Then the Chairman should require commanders to establish priorities by event and task—deciding if exercises are primarily training or engagement activities and recognizing that unrealized training must be accomplished another way. The Joint Staff should develop an engagement activity scheduling and tracking system similar (and complementary) to the joint training system, or adjust the system to identify joint and combined exercise primary focus. Service budgeteers should then allocate current joint exercise funding into joint training and theater engagement accounts based on identified training and engagement requirements.

Perhaps most importantly, the services must become more deeply educated about the joint training system. Understanding its basics is just the first step. Leaders and trainers on all levels must grasp the synergy of a holistic combatant command joint and combined exercise environment. The problem is balancing joint warfighting and engagement requirements with component training, operational, and maintenance funding constraints.

A generation of joint warfighters is required who realize that the answer to joint training problems is not necessarily new systems of managing training and resources but more innovative methods for employing existing systems. This approach suggests that the military must become a learning organization able to adapt to changing environments. The catalyst for that transformation must be education.

Great effort was invested in developing and refining JTS concepts. The problem with the system is that reality does not reflect those concepts. The joint force cannot afford to continue to ignore problems. Today's undisciplined execution is a confusing and inefficient mix of actual joint training and other training-related and engagement-focused events. The indirect result is a growing, unhealthy rift in relations among the Joint Staff, services, and combatant commands. Attempting to treat only the symptoms will not cure the disease.

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